

Civil Legal Aid in Family Law & Domestic Violence

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a **23% increase** in cases related to domestic violence, custody, and divorce. Survivors of domestic violence have a critical need for help with restraining orders and other family law issues.

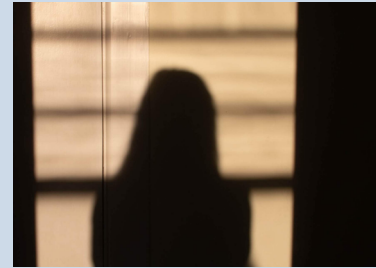
Legal Aid lawyers help families and survivors of domestic violence by:

- Providing advice and representation and enforcing legal protections for survivors of domestic violence
- Securing favorable property settlements and preventing foreclosure and eviction
- Enforcing divorce and child support orders
- Addressing denial of benefits

Low-income people at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$34,688 per year for a family of four) qualify for civil legal aid.

Joanna's Story

When Joanna attempted to leave a physically and emotionally abusive relationship with her child, her boyfriend became violent. The De Novo Center for Healing and Justice assisted Joanna



in obtaining an emergency protection order and custody of her child, and coordinated with a civilian domestic violence advocate to ensure safe pick-up of the child. De Novo represented Joanna at her hearing to extend the emergency orders, helped her receive counseling to support her during the difficult legal process, and aided her in finding a new, safe home.

2,952 family law cases closed in FY21, including:

Divorce, Separation, and Annulment	1,048
Custody and Visitation	810
Domestic Abuse	455
Child and Spousal Support	244
Other Family	230
Adult Guardianship and Conservatorship	118
Paternity, Name Change, Parental Rights Termination, and Adoption	47

Last year, legal aid provided
\$103 million
in economic benefits to the Commonwealth and its residents, including
\$1.4 million
in health care savings for survivors of domestic violence
\$3.2 million
won in total lifetime child support